

RE: DEITY - THE BREATH OF CREATION

1.4 Art of Creation

Spending time with Mother was always a treat, in Reika's opinion. The green-haired girl hummed as she sat in the boughs of her Tree, kicking her legs as they dangled off the side of the large branch and looking far below, at Mother, who tended to the roots. She wasn't sure why Mother felt the need to tend to the Life-Giving Tree, it would grow plenty fine on its own, but wasn't going to question Her if it meant spending more time together. While She was very busy managing the Four Realms and helping them grow, She still always made time to spend with Her children.

Reika was just greedy, and wanted more.

But for now, she could just enjoy her Mother's presence.

With a contented sigh, Reika lay back on the branch and looked up through the massive canopy of her tree, watching the great-big leaves – each as big as twenty mountains – rustle and wave, and feeling the warm light of the Realm Sun as it poured down upon her. Unlike her siblings, who were still wary of the great creation even after all these years, she could see and

understand its beauty. With her connection to the Tree, she could feel the way its light and warmth soaked into the leaves and land, nourishing the trunk and fueling its growth...oh!

Reika's eyes flew open as something beneath her Tree shifted, a swell of relief flowing up through its trunk and making the branches shudder.

"There we go," Mother said from far below.

With barely a thought Reika pushed herself from the branch, the wind both catching her and accelerating her fall. She landed softly in front of Mother, toes digging into the soft soil that surrounded her tree and smoothing out her dress with both hands. She watched her with a seemingly amused expression, green eyes boring into her with their usual intensity.

"What was that?" Reika asked. Her Tree felt...relieved, as if a weight had been lifted, or metaphorical spine had been popped. "What did you do?"

"That is why we tend to things, my dear," Mother said lightly, stepping forward and gently spinning Reika around, pointing to where the roots of the Tree met the soil. "And you tell me what I did. Look, what has changed?" She asked. Reika frowned. Mother always did this – never giving a straight answer,

always encouraging her to find the answer on her own, but gently guiding her in that direction nonetheless.

With a small shake of her head, Reika focused on where Mother was pointing, allowing her senses to open to the world around her. Elements fluttered about madly, the wind still swirling around her, happy to follow her requests. The earth beneath her feet was strong, but ever-changing, the roots of her Tree digging through the soil in search of nutrients...oh! That's what had changed!

"You untangled the elements beneath the tree!" She exclaimed. "I didn't even notice it until now." Elemental energy was different from the basic elements that physically existed – they could produce said elements, but didn't necessarily have to *be* them. Fire energy could exist without the presence of fire, and that had been building up beneath the Tree; a tangled knot of fire and earth energy, pressing against the Tree's roots painfully.

"The physical world is constantly changing, so we have to be vigilant. There is a natural flow of energy throughout the land here, with the Life-Giving Tree as a locus. Eventually these changes may slow, but with how rapidly things are changing now, and how the energy can react to everything from weight to the movement of the Realm Sun, there are bound to be times when it becomes tangled." Mother said with a nod. "Even now, the land around the Tree is continuing to expand, elements combining to create a place for life to thrive. Soon we'll be able to plant more plants and create true life here, but not yet." She said a little wistfully.

Reika nodded. She had noticed that about her Realm, especially when comparing to Keilan's or Elvira's Realms. Here, the earth changed, the Tree changed, everything was much more chaotic than in the Heaven or Karmic Realms.

"I see." She said.

"Now that's done, how about we go get some ice cream?" Mother asked suddenly. Reika giggled at the sudden change in tone, turning to face Her with an amused shake of her head. Mother had the strangest of cravings sometimes – the past few decades had been about ice cream. Where did She even come up with that idea? "Don't give me that look. We both know you're all too happy to go get ice cream."

"I wasn't complaining. But I'll come only if we eat in the garden." She said, setting her hands on her hips. Mother snorted and ruffled her hair, already drifting off toward Her house, floating as it was in the empty space between the Four Realms and the Realm Sun.

"Where *e/se* would we eat?" She asked. "C'mon, maybe we'll get there before Alexander eats it all again." Reika hesitated for just a moment, but the lure of ice cream and spending more time with Mother was just too great. She licked

her lips as she chased after Her, flying through the skies with barely a thought.

At times the treat was too sweet for her, but...it was so deliciously *indulgent*. She was starting to understand what Mother meant when She said to enjoy the little things. Besides, while Alexander loved ice cream more than anyone else, he shouldn't be too upset if they ate some without him. After all, Mother could always just create more.

In my completely unbiased opinion, Reika might just be the cutest thing ever. All my children were cute, but she was just...adorable. She was currently sitting in my garden, a little thing growing just behind the house I had created for myself and my children, whenever they left their realms to visit, her hands digging into the dirt beneath flowers comprised of pure golden light. An empty bowl of chocolate ice cream sat forgotten beside her, the remnants of its contents smeared around the corners of her mouth, her tongue sticking out as she worked.

Her brows furrowed in concentration, a strand of green hair falling into her face as her fingers traced the flowers' roots. Then, all of a sudden she smiled brilliantly, the lightflowers (or were they sunflowers...? Nah, lightflowers.) collectively shuddering as the harsh gold light they shed from their petals softened.

“I did it!” she said happily, the flowers in her hair taking on a more vibrant hue in her excitement.

“You did,” I agreed, setting down my tea and clapping appreciatively. I’d traded my ice cream for hot black tea not too long ago – my craving for sweet things was fading, apparently.

With bouncing steps Reika ran over and wrapped me in a massive hug, nearly knocking me out of my chair in the process. I chuckled and hugged her back, breaking away after a brief moment.

“Do you mind if I take some of those flowers and spread them over the Physical Realm?” she asked, looking at me with big, earnest eyes. Gah. How dare she weaponize her cuteness like this! It’s unfair! Not that I would have denied her anyway, though. “I guess what I’m really asking is if you can make more for me?” I nodded slowly.

“I mean, sure, but you do know that you can make some yourself too, right?” I asked, cocking my head to the side. “Wait, that came out a little too aggressively. What I meant to say was of course I will make more for you, but I figured you’d like to make some of your own.” I amended. Reika frowned at me as I stood, crossing her arms.

“I would love to. I’d love to grow my own garden, like you do. But I don’t know how. I can’t create things like you do,” she grumbled. At this, I smiled. Time to reveal my master plan with everything I’d been teaching her – call me Mister Miyagi!

“Sure you can,” I said, unable to hide the amusement in my voice. “Maybe you can’t create something from *nothing*, but the powers of creation are not beyond you. What do you think you were doing in the garden just now?”

“That’s different. I was just twisting energy.” She said.

“It’s the same concept. When I made those flowers all I did was take a bit of this,” I said, plucking a ray of light out of the air, “and this,” I gently booped my finger against Reika’s nose, making her giggle and taking a bit of the life energy that perpetually swirled around her, “and combined them together like this.” With that I tangled two forms of energy together, using a bit of matter from the balls of primordial chaos that floated behind me to give it a physical form. What popped out was a perfect lightflower, gleaming as it was.

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Reika was silent for a moment as I gently planted the flower beside the others. When I turned back around her eyes were closed, hands held together almost as if in prayer.

"Clear your mind. You must first set your intent – what is it you wish to create?" I said, keeping my tone as smooth and neutral as possible. "Feel the energies within yourself and around you. They want to become something. Guide them." Reika nodded her head, furrowing her brows.

And I opened my Eyes.

The world expanded before me. Naturally I could see energies and information far beyond what any mortal – and most gods – could. But when I really focused and opened myself to all of creation it was almost...overwhelming. Karma took on its own life, colors impossible to describe with mere words danced before my eyes, a Shadow – I focused through it, forcibly snapping out of the reverie my action involuntarily caused to focus on Reika and her alone. Like this I could observe the energies within her, the intent in her actions, even, visible to my eyes. Like this, I could potentially see what she was going to do before she did it, I could even read her thoughts themselves.

I purposefully avoided looking at those, allowing her privacy and instead focusing on the energies within her.

Nine threads of elemental energies swirled within her, flowing toward her hands, where they swirled together in her palms. A trickle of life energy flowed down from the crown of her head, flying out of her forehead to make a small ball in-between her hands. I smiled as I watched her begin to weave, carefully binding the nine elemental energies together as if she was weaving a tapestry.

She had it, and on her first try, too. Still, I watched until the end, observing the process and noting where she could improve if she ever asked me. Only when she was finished did I close my Eyes, allowing the world to fall away so I could enjoy her creation in a simpler way.

Reika had made a flower. A flower with nine delicate petals, each made of a different element; fire, water, lightning, wind, earth, wood, metal, light, and dark. And yet the stamen...my smile widened as I observed the flowing energy within, swirling in a manner that indicated chaos, but actually showed an inherent truth to the elements. None were in true opposition. Each fueled the other in their own way, giving way to life.

“Beautiful,” I said honestly. Reika twitched, looking up as if she had forgotten I was even there. Sweat beaded her brow, her eyes wide and unfocused, yet grinning widely.

"I did it!" she exclaimed. I nodded and ruffled her hair fondly, noting some of those same flowers growing there.

"You did," I agreed. "Great job." For a moment we were silent, merely observing the flower, until, with a smile, Reika handed it to me. I gently took it, feeling the delicate power that flowed within, brushing my fingers against the petals. The life within wiggled happily at my touch, the small plant-spirit forming within humming a small tune.

"Keep that one." She said softly.

"Are you sure?" I asked, already clutching the flower to my chest like a child given a toy. Reika giggled, hiding her mouth behind her hand even as she wove on the spot.

"Yes. Thank you, Mother. I think...I think I need to go think about what you taught me..." she said, voice distant. Her feet lifted off of the ground as she drifted off, clearly still dazed as she headed back to her realm. I watched her go for a time, flying through the empty skies, and only turned back to the flower once she was a fair distance away.

"If I had a fridge, I would pin you up there. This is like my god-children giving me their first finger painting," I mused, very acutely aware of another set of eyes upon me. I had known they were there for a while, just hadn't acted upon it yet. "You can come out now, Keilan." I said.

My son pulled himself out of the shadows of my house, materializing in a way I was sure he thought was stealthy, but was painfully clear to my eyes. I hadn't spent literal millennia examining my own powers and the nature of creation for nothing, after all. Plus I had been watching for him – I'd called him here, after all.

"Why do you teach like that?" he asked, leathery wings stretching out and tail thrashing. I hummed, looking about the garden for a good spot to plant Reika's flower. The problem was, I had filled it up with my own plants. I wanted her flower to be somewhere it wouldn't be overshadowed by my creations – no, I just didn't want it to get lost. This was the first form of life any of my children had created besides the Life-Giving Tree, which didn't count. It deserved to be a centerpiece! A showcase!

"Teach like what?" I asked, motioning for him to follow me as I headed inside my home, pushing open the wood door. The interior was plain and simple; I had a little kitchen filled with cooking supplies for when I didn't want to just create food, a living room with a plush armchair and a fireplace, and, of course, five bedrooms. One for each of my eldest children, and myself. But nowhere to put Reika's flower. Did I need to add another room? Maybe an art

gallery. Come to think of it, now that the realms were getting closer to being habitable for life a workshop might be nice, too.

Hmm.

“Like that. Never giving a straight answer, or just showing us how to do something.” He accused as I walked around my house, wondering where to add the new rooms.

“There’s many reasons for that. First and foremost being that souls grow by overcoming challenges.” I said, glancing at my liquor cabinet. Hundreds of different forms of liquor sat within the deceptively small cabinet, locked by my strongest of magics. Try as I might, I hadn’t been able to replicate the whiskey that I’d made while creating the universe...and that had been *good stuff*. “Be it a desire to figure it out yourself, to not have me do everything for you, or even frustration at me not giving a straight answer – in the right circumstances, it can lead to growth.”

“I don’t understand,” Keilan said.

“I know.” I said. It had been incredibly frustrating for me to learn too, when I had been mortal. Conflict was the spice of life. In the right doses and measure, it could be *inspiring*. If there were no conflict or challenges, then

many souls and beings would be...satisfied. And therefore have no desire to rise. "The other reason is...well, let me give you an example."

With a wave of my hand an entire wall of my home was blown away, simply disintegrated into nothingness and giving me a good view of the Realm Sun. Keilan flinched away from its light, and I forged ahead, ignoring his hesitation.

"How do you build a house?" I asked. Keilan hesitated, clearly having what he thought was an answer but knowing that I was looking for a different one.

"Like this," he said, raising his hands. Inky darkness rose from his palms, not moving to fill in the wall I had just destroyed but instead circling above his hands, forming a perfect replica of my house. The dark power twisted and shimmered, bringing forth colors to match, even.

"Very good." I said. "But why like that? Why not make a house that looks like this?" With a wave of my hand my powers surged, chunks of primordial chaos flying forward to create a domed house made of sandstone that connected to the walls of my old house, creating an entirely new room. Then, with but a thought, it was rearranged into a log longhouse, complete with a Viking-esque throne. A bit distasteful, in my opinion, but I was proving a point.

"I..." Keilan started.

“Each of you children has a desire within you,” I started, rearranging the structure of the longhouse so it created something more to my tastes. Thinking of all the architecture I’d seen in my past life had me feeling a bit nostalgic, though. “In Reika’s case, it was to create life. I could have shown her directly how to make a flower, but then she would have only been able to create one flower. It’s just like this house.

“You can use wood to build the walls, but what wood? What about color – do you have wood that is purple, or do you paint it to be that way? Why not use stone? And what about paint – how does one even make paint? Or nails, to hold the wood together, and where does one find metal for nails, and forge it? For us it is as simple as creating metal, but far more goes into it for souls without that level of power. What and how do you decorate a home, what colors match and what is tasteful? How does culture affect this?”

Each question was punctuated by another addition to the new wing of my house. Walls of a rich, dark mahogany, to reach the vaulted ceiling, trimmed with gold and silver. Floors of marble, ranging from red to purple, mixing together intricate patterns while still somehow appearing natural. Shelves lined the walls, tapestries weaving together to create stylized depictions of creation – starting with the birth of my children. White-marble pillars rose up to support a dome I added as an afterthought, massive glass windows leading to a veranda and giving a good view of the Sun.

“I could show you how to build a house.” I allowed. “And many times, I do. But for the level of excellence I know you wish to be at, you must know more. Dive deeper, learn the intricacies. *Understand*. That is the true difference between the power of one soul and another – the level of understanding. One might call such a thing enlightenment.”

“I see. I think I understand.” Keilan said.

“Good.” I said with a nod, creating a little pot in the very center of the newly created room and planting Reika’s flower within. Perfect. Though the house still needs some rearranging...especially because, knowing myself, I will want to keep all the little things my children make and give me. “Now, I didn’t actually call you here to give you a lecture about teaching.”

“Yes, Mother. I apologize for side-tracking you.” Keilan said with a small bow.

“You and your formalities.” I said fondly, reaching out and ruffling his hair, much to his annoyance. He scowled and tried to swat me away but I stayed firm, moving to wrap my arm around his shoulders and guide him to the big windows. I felt his muscles tense as we approached, the light of the Realm Sun kissing my skin gently. “It is quite alright, Keilan. I am happy to help, to explain, to spend time with you. But, the reason I called you here is to help

you with something else entirely. It's high time we dealt with your fear of the Sun."